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Tight security in place for by-polls on 13 seats today

• Most NA, PA seats fell vacant after disqualification of PTI lawmakers over May 9 riot convictions • Over 20,000 cops deployed across Punjab • Of 2,800 polling stations, 408 declared highly sensitive, 1,032 sensitive • ECP code bars soldiers from interfering in polling, counting

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: All arrangements have been finalised for the by-elections in 13 National Assembly and Punjab Assembly constituencies being held today (Sunday) amid tight security, with army troops deployed outside polling stations designated as "most sensitive".

Most seats fell vacant following the disqualification of PTI lawmakers convicted for their alleged involvement in the May 9, 2023, violent riots after the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan.

The six National Assembly constituencies where polling will take place are NA-18 (Haripur), NA-96 (Faisalabad), NA-104 (Faisalabad), NA-129 (Lahore), NA-143 (Sahiwal) and NA-185 (Dera Ghazi Khan).

The seven Punjab Assembly constituencies where by-polls are being held are PP-73 (Sargodha), PP-87 (Mianwali), PP-98 (Faisalabad), PP-115 (Faisalabad), PP-116 (Faisalabad), PP-203 (Sahiwal) and PP-269 (Muzaffargarh).

"Election material, including ballot papers, has safely reached the polling stations. Foolproof security arrangements have been made and specific instructions issued to the concerned authorities to ensure free and fair elections," a senior official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said.

Meanwhile, more than 20,000 police personnel have been deployed for security during the by-elections in the province's national and provincial constituencies.

On the instructions of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar, security arrangements for the by-elections across the province have been completed.

A Punjab Police spokesperson said more than 20,000 police officers and personnel have been deployed to perform security duties for the by-polls.

IGP Anwar said the Punjab Police would provide voters with a peaceful, secure environment so they could exercise their right to vote without fear or hesitation. A policy of zero tolerance would be adopted against violations of the ECP's code of conduct, Section 144 and the ban on weapons, he added.

Police have been deployed at 939 male, 889 female and 964 joint polling stations across the province. Out of a total of 2,792 polling stations, 408 have been declared highly sensitive and 1,032 sensitive.

According to the ECP's code of conduct for the armed forces, troops will be deployed outside polling stations declared "most sensitive" and will remain in quick-response mode at the remaining stations as third-tier responders.

The personnel have been directed to perform duties strictly in accordance with Article 245 of the Constitution, the law and the mandate assigned to the armed forces to assist the Election Commission.

While stationed outside selected polling stations, they have been instructed to focus solely on ensuring a secure environment, complying with all relevant laws, and maintaining public confidence

Continued on Page 5

(CLOCKWISE from top left) Security officials consult polling staff after receiving ballot papers in Toba Tek Singh on Saturday, a day ahead of by-elections; teachers carry election material in Lahore; and policemen can be seen posted outside the office of a returning officer.—Dawn

FCC asked to return appeal to SC in judges' transfer case

IHC judges argue 27th Amendment's validity is yet to be decided

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The sitting judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) have filed a miscellaneous petition before the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) contesting the shifting of an intra-court appeal from the Supreme Court to the newly established constitutional forum.

The case pertains to the transfer of three judges from other high courts to the federal capital. In June, the SC's constitutional bench had declared that their transfers were not unconstitutional. Subsequently, the five IHC judges had challenged the decision and filed an intra-court appeal. However, the intra-court appeal in the case has now been fixed before the FCC for hearing on Nov 24.

The application filed by IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz marks a significant legal move at a time when the 27th Amendment — under which the FCC has been established — is itself facing criticism and constitutional objections from multiple quarters, including senior members of the judiciary.

The IHC judges demanded that the intra-court appeal in the judges' transfer case be returned to the SC, arguing that the FCC lacks constitutional authority to hear the matter. They stressed that the appeal had originally been filed before the SC, which remains the apex judicial body entrusted with appellate authority in such cases under the 1973 Constitution. They asserted that the transfer of the appeal to the federal court was a consequence of the 27th Amendment, which they claim is contrary to the spirit and structure of the Constitution.

FCC finds support in apex lawyer bodies: Page 3

Legal fight: Editorial on Page 6

Trichotomy of power

They argued that parliament despite having the power to amend the Constitution cannot exercise such power in a manner that undermines or dismantles the judiciary, noting that judicial independence forms part of the Constitution's basic framework. They contended that the 1973 Constitution clearly delineates three fundamental pillars of the state — the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary — and specifies the limits and boundaries of their authority.

According to the petitioners, any constitutional amendment that disturbs this equilibrium or attempts to restrict or redistribute powers in a way that affects judicial independence is inherently unconstitutional.

The application cited multiple landmark SC judgements affirming the separation of powers, judicial autonomy, and the concept that no constitutional amendment may alter the basic structure of the Constitution. The judges argued that shifting appellate jurisdiction in sensitive judicial matters away from the SC amounts to diluting the authority of the judiciary as envisioned in the original constitutional design.

The judges emphasised that their intra-court appeal could not have been transferred to the FCC because the very amendment

Continued on Page 11

Joint Bannu operation leaves eight terrorists dead: ISPR

By Ghulam Mursalin Marwat

LAKKI MARWAT: Eight terrorists were killed in a joint operation conducted by the security forces and law enforcement agencies in Bannu district on Saturday, the military's media wing said.

"The operation underscores the strengthened collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies and security forces, who have significantly intensified intelligence-driven operations in the region," the Inter-Service Public Relations said in a statement.

Giving details of the operation, a police official in Bannu said that an attack on an armoured personnel carrier by terrorists in the Domel area triggered a fierce gun battle that lasted for eight hours. He said that the security forces and Counter-Terrorism Department commandos also reached the area and took part in the gunfight.

"During the operation, the law enforcement personnel killed six khwarij while their several accomplices were injured," he claimed.

According to the ISPR, eight terrorists were killed during the operation. It said weapons and ammunition were also

Continued on Page 5

Opp demands probe after 'damning' IMF report

• TTAP leaders claim Rs5.3tr corruption, ask govt to come clean • Zubair says those involved in sugar scandal being protected; Jhagra alleges economic policies controlled by 'a small group'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: In light of a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that highlighted persistent corruption challenges in the country, the opposition parties have called for a probe into the "worst financial scandal of Pakistan's history" and clarification from the government over its attempts to delay the report's release.

Leaders of the Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Aiyeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) made these demands while addressing a press conference at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad on Saturday. They also alleged that the IMF report identified corruption to the tune of Rs5,300 billion in the governance system of Pakistan. They also termed it the "worst financial scandal" of Pakistan's history and demanded that the names of those involved in corruption be made public.

The opposition leaders also demanded an explanation from the prime minister on the report and identified those involved in these corrupt practices.

Former PML-N leader Mohammad Zubair Umar alleged that the IMF report was disclosed by the government after immense pressure from the money lender. He said it should be probed where these Rs5,300 billion had gone. He alleged that the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) awarded contracts to its blue-eyed contractors, claiming those who were involved in the sugar scandal were also protected.

Zubair Umar, former Sindh governor and an economic expert, said that 240 million people were suffering because of the policy failures of the current government. He said that the gap between the rich and the poor was continuously increasing. He said the report was published because it was a precondition for the release of the next loan tranche by the IMF.

PTI's Taimur Khan Jhagra claimed that the government's economic policies were being controlled by a small group which comprised political, bureaucratic, and non-political persons. He said that Basic Pay Scale (BPS)-22 officers, who have become unaccountable, should feel embarrassed over the report.

He said the 186-page IMF report even exposed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as it claimed that the NAB was working under the influence of the political setup. He said NAB should be asked about the Rs5,300 billion corruption and arrests in this regard.

He also criticised the 27th Amendment, alleging that the judiciary had

Continued on Page 5

Govt lifts ban on gold trade after industry outcry

Restores SRO 760 of 2013; introduces tighter documentation, stricter monitoring

By Tahir Sherani

KARACHI: The government has lifted a ban on the import and export of gold and other precious metals, restoring SRO 760 of 2013 and allowing jewellery exports to resume, it emerged on Saturday.

The decision follows industry pressure over stalled orders, while updated rules introduce tighter documentation, digital record-keeping and stricter monitoring of the trade.

In May, the government imposed a 60-day ban on the import and export of precious metals and gemstones in an attempt to stabilise foreign exchange reserves. The restriction was also linked to tensions with India and viewed as a potential measure to curb the flow of precious metals via Dubai.

In a fresh notification, SRO 2198 dated Nov 21, 2025, the commerce ministry rescinded its May directives, effectively lifting the ban on the import and export of gold and other precious metals.

The ministry said the period of suspension under SRO 760 was "accordingly condoned, thereby enabling exporters to avail the mandatory entitlement period of 120 days under the entrustment scheme".

The entrustment scheme allows the export of jewellery against imported gold supplied as a partial advance payment by foreign buyers for the manufacture of jewellery to be exported. Exporters are required to ship only eligible and authorised items within 120 days from the date of import.

Gold remains a traditional store of value and plays a significant role in Pakistan's cultural, financial and manufacturing sectors. The country predominantly imports gold from the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland and other major gold-trading hubs.

Industry representatives earlier warned that restrictions on the gold trade had effectively paralysed the gold and jewellery export sector, with exporters unable to fulfil orders despite having received raw gold from international buyers under legal contracts.

In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Federation of

Continued on Page 5

Pakistan, EU stress need to boost trade, investment ties

• Dar, bloc's VP co-chair 7th Strategic Dialogue in Brussels • Agree to strengthen cooperation under Strategic Engagement Plan
• Deputy PM says maritime threats both 'multidimensional and transnational'

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union (EU) have underlined the importance of further deepening trade and investment ties, including through the bloc's GSP+ scheme, as a driver for sustainable growth, export diversification, job creation and mutually beneficial economic opportunity, the Foreign Office (FO) said on Saturday.

The development came as the 7th Strategic Dialogue between Pakistan and the EU was convened in the Belgian capital of Brussels. The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and EU Vice President Kaja Kallas. A day earlier, Mr Dar addressed the 4th EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum Roundtable in Brussels.

The GSP+ status allows Pakistan to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on European exports.

According to a FO statement, the meeting provided a "comprehensive review" of the full spectrum of Pakistan-EU relations, "building on the positive momentum of recent high-level engagements and sustained institutional interactions".

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a "broad-based, multidimensional and forward-looking partnership anchored in shared values, the UN Charter, multilateralism, and the principles of mutual respect and cooperation" during the meeting.

DEPUTY Prime Minister Ishaq Dar shakes hands with EU Vice President Kaja Kallas.—X/@ForeignOfficePk

"The dialogue also offered an opportunity to exchange views on regional and global developments, including South Asia, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and broader geopolitical developments," the FO said.

"Both sides underlined the importance of coordinated approaches to peace, stability, sustainable development, and global challenges such as climate change and connectivity," it added.

Moreover, Pakistan and the EU agreed to strengthen cooperation under the Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP 2019), advance work on ongoing dialogues, and identify concrete avenues to expand collaboration in the years ahead.

'Maritime threats'

The deputy premier also delivered a statement on critical maritime security, noting that "today's maritime threats are both multidimensional and transnational".

"We face threats ranging from piracy, terrorism and trafficking of arms and narcotics, to cyber vulnerabilities at port infrastructure, marine pollution, and the growing climate-induced risks to coastal zones," he was quoted as saying in an FO statement.

Mr Dar said Pakistan was a littoral state, one sharing the coastline with a particular sea or ocean, with a geostrategic location at the crossroads of key international sea lanes and the Arabian Sea as its "fifth neighbour".

He continued that the

Continued on Page 11

ON OTHER PAGES

PTA seeks tax cuts ahead of 5G rollout

The expected launch of 5G services next year is set to transform several auxiliary features available on mobile phones, but the telecom regulator wants the government to first reduce taxes on raw materials used by the sector to ensure a smooth rollout. The prime minister has given the IT ministry and the PTA a February 2026 deadline to auction the 5G spectrum. **Page 9**

Climate deal sidesteps fossil fuels

Nations have clinched a deal at the UN's COP30 climate summit in Brazil without a roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels as demanded by the European Union, opting instead for a compromise to boost finance for poor nations. The approval of nearly 200 countries came after two weeks of fraught negotiations in the city of Belem, marked by the notable US absence as President Trump shunned the event. **Page 12**

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